METHODS

Background Research

Background research was conducted at the Office of State Archaeology (OSA) and the Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Department of Archives and History in Raleigh; the Davis Library and the North Carolina Collection at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; the Sampson County Courthouse in Clinton; and the library at Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., in Tarboro. Additional information was provided by the McLamb family, current owners of Clear Run Plantation; Michael Harmon, staff archaeologist for the National Forest Service of North Carolina; Terry Harper of North Carolina Historic Sites; and Tom Padgett of NCDOT.

Field Methods

The excavations took place from January 23 to February 21, 1997. The first two days were spent manually clearing brush and vines from the site. A permanent site datum and a 10-x-10-foot grid were then established. The site datum was a nail driven into a tree on the edge of the woods beyond the area to be affected by the bridge replacement. The grid datum was set at a distance of 46.2 feet (14.08 m) southwest of this tree at 188 degrees from magnetic north. The elevation of the tree nail was based on a point on NC 411 and was keyed to the construction plans. Each grid unit was given a number that corresponded to the southeast corner of the unit. All measurements were taken in feet and tenths of feet.

Elevations of all grid points were taken from the grid datum using a transit. Subsequent elevations during excavation were taken from the southeast corner of the units. Elevations of the 5-x-5-foot units were taken after additional brush was cleared in the western portion of the site. Surface planviews of units containing cultural remains (timbers) were drawn, and all unit surfaces were photographed. Planviews were also drawn at levels containing features. All unit profiles were mapped from the surface of each unit, and at least one profile of each unit was photographed.

Ten 10-x-10-foot units and four 5-x-5-foot units were excavated (Table 1). The leafy, humic layer was discarded without screening. Units were excavated in natural levels and soil was screened through 0.25-inch hardware cloth. Due to the heavy concentrations of metal, magnets were used to recover small fragments from the screens. Soil colors were described using the Munsell Soil Color Chart. Photographs were taken at the surface of all zones containing cultural features as well as at the interface of soil zones. Level forms documenting zones were maintained for each unit.

Table 1: Excavation Units at 31SP300*1*

Provenience	Unit Size
N10 E60	10' x 10'
S0 E30	10' x 10'
S0 E40	10' x 10'
S10 E20	10' x 10'
S10 E30	10' x 10'
S10 E40	10' x 10'
S20 E30	10' x 10'
S20 E40	10' x 10'
S30 E20	10' x 10'
S30 E40	10' x 10'
S30 W3	5' x 5'
S40 W21	5' x 5'
S45 W10	5' x 5'
S45 W32	5' x 5'

All features were photographed and mapped at their first appearance. They were then bisected and profiled. Feature fill was excavated in natural zones, and soil was screened through 0.25-inch hardware cloth. Generally, features were fully excavated although some were only bisected. Soil samples for flotation and the testing of iron content were taken where appropriate. Feature forms documenting the excavation process were kept for all features. The floor joists (Feature 7) were completely exposed, mapped, and photographed.

All artifacts were bagged in plastic bags and labeled with the correct provenience information. Due to the large quantities of brick, coal, slag, and clinker, these materials, with the exception of a small sample of each, were weighed and discarded in the field.

Laboratory Methods

All artifacts were cleaned, labeled, and prepared for curation according to the standards and guidelines issued by the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology. Metal was dry-brushed and a sample of it was conserved. Artifacts were labeled with an accession number, assigned by the Office of State Archaeology, with an added suffix reference number. Members of the Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., staff conducted artifact analysis.

All historic artifacts were analyzed according to type of material. Both prehistoric and historic ceramics were analyzed, typed, quantified, and described in comparison to established ceramic typologies. Artifact analysis focused on chronological data as well as artifact function. Spatial patterning information as well as artifact inventories from other historic sites was utilized in determining context and function of artifacts from this site.

A sample of metal artifacts was conserved in the Coastal Carolina Research, Inc., lab. Methods employed for the conservation included investigative cleaning that involved the use of dental picks and a dremel tool to determine the nature of the corrosion and the condition of the artifacts; the use of chemicals, specifically manganesed phospholene #7, to aid in the removal of corrosion from the artifacts; glass-bead blasting, which mildly removes corrosion from the artifacts using laser streams of finely crushed glass; and electrolysis, which cleans the artifact and removes the corrosion.

At the completion of the project, all artifacts will be returned to the North Carolina Department of Transportation in Raleigh for curation.